THE DISOBEDIENT KIDS

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THE
DISOBEDIENT KIDS

AND OTHER CZECHO-SLOVAK FAIRY TALES

BY BOŽENA NĚMCOVÁ

*

INTERPRETED BY

WILLIAM H. TOLMAN, PH. D.

AND

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PRAGUE,

1921.

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BOŽENA NĚMCOVÁ

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INTERPRETED BY
WILLIAM H. TOLMAN, PH. D. AND PROF. V. SMETÁNKA
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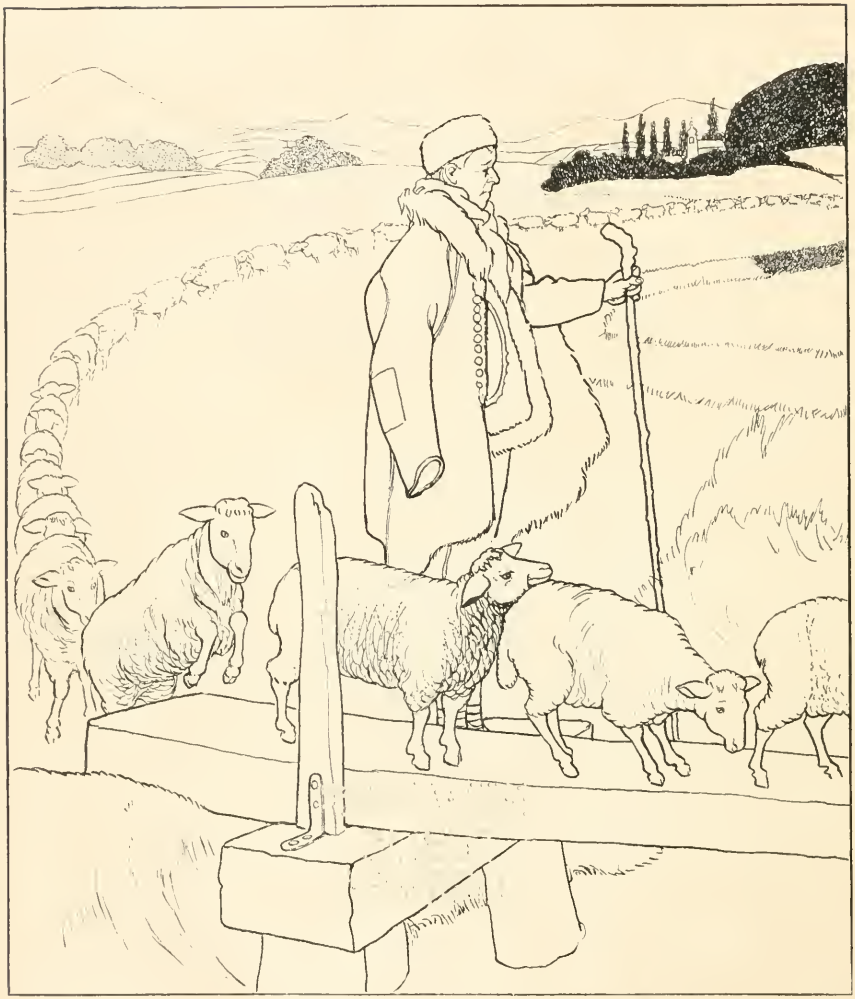
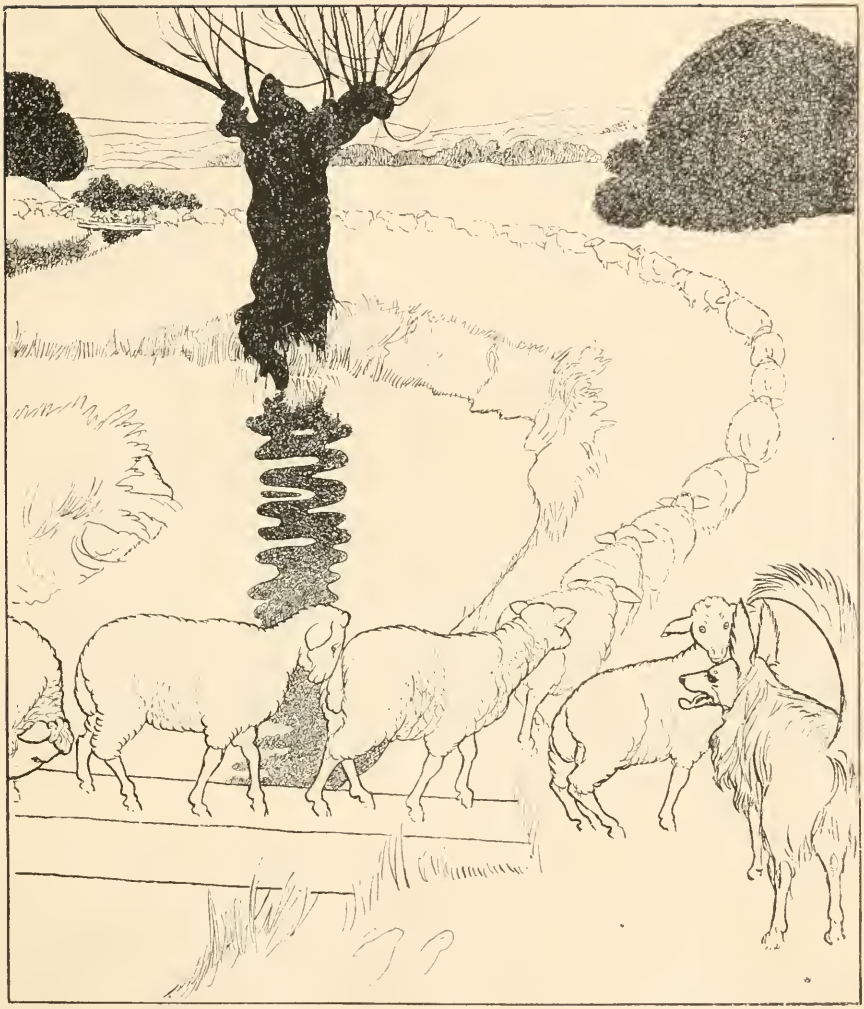
A Tale Without End.

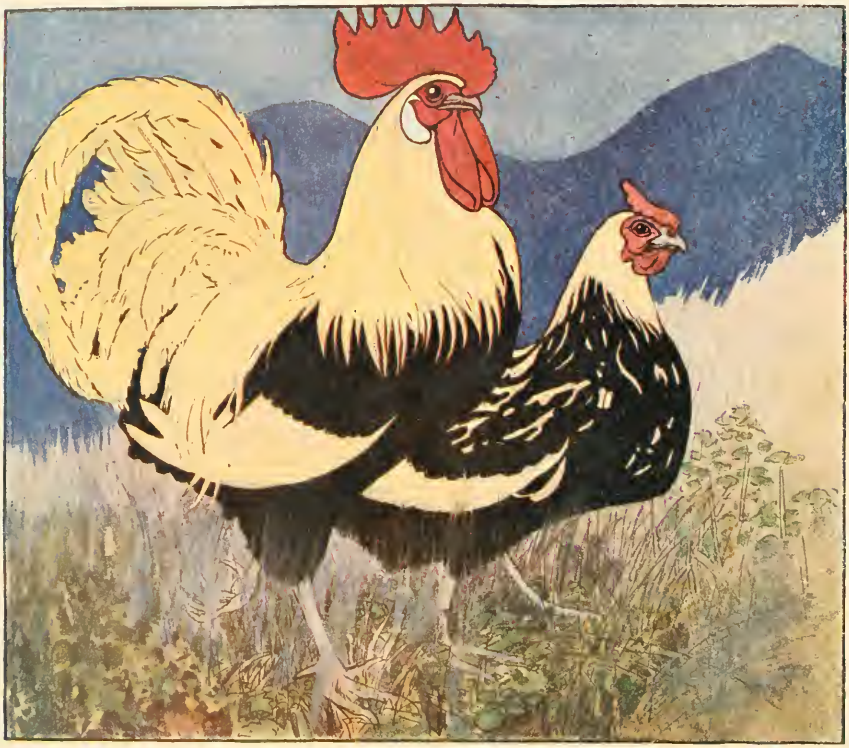


Once upon a time, about sun set, a little shepherd lad was pasturing his sheep, near a wide brook. Of course the boy was in a great hurry to get home, where he knew a good supper was waiting for him.



Now the wide brook had only a narrow plank for a bridge, so that the sheep were obliged to cross over, in a line, one at a time. Now children, let us wait till the boy has driven all his sheep over the bridge, then I will finish my story.

The Little Cock and the Little Hen.



Once upon a time, a little cock and a little hen went to the Giant Mountains to hunt for strawberries. On the way, they agreed to divide equally all the fruit they found. The little hen was the first to find a big berry and calling the little cock according to their agreement, each ate his half.

Then the little cock found a strawberry, not quite so luscious as the first, but most tempting, in fact so much so, that he said nothing about it to his little partner. Instead, he tried to gobble it down as fast as he could. But it stuck in his throat. He tried every means to get that berry down. He stretched out his neck, moved his head backwards and forwards, jumped up and down, shook himself, in fact tried every thing to make that berry go down. But there it stuck! He then began to show signs of great distress.

The little hen happening to look up, wondered what he was up to and then ran to see. When she saw that he was choking, she became greatly frightened and looked in all directions for help. Suddenly she happened to think of the spring and away she flew to get a drop of his water.

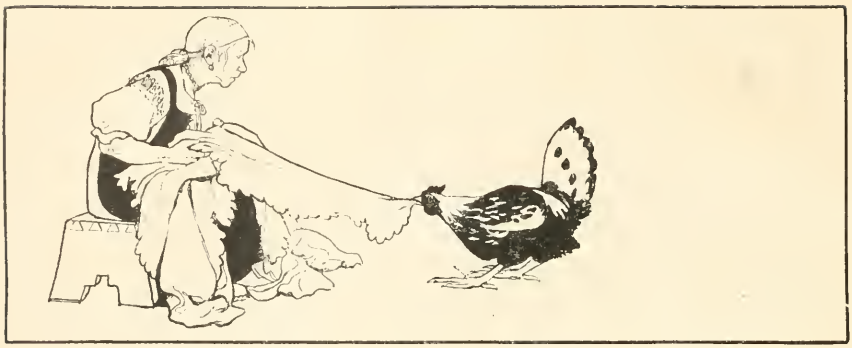
Trembling with excitement, she panted, "Dear spring, dear spring, give me a drop of your water for my little partner, the cock. He is choking to death. Hurry, hurry, dear spring."

But the spring coldly replied, "No, I will not give you a drop, unless you bring me a leaf from the linden tree".

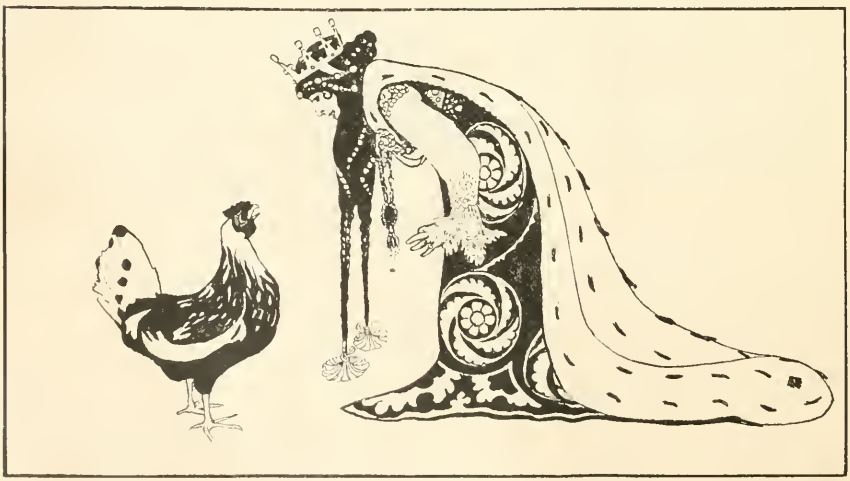
So the little hen hurries off to the linden tree, of whom she begs a leaf, which she can give to the spring, who will give her a drop of water for the little cock.

But lo, the linden tree has his bargain. "Yes, I will give you a leaf, but you must bring me a kerchief that the peasant woman is making." So off to the peasant woman, the little hen flys.

"Dear woman, I pray you, give me a kerchief which I can give to the linden tree, who will give me a leaf which I will give to the spring, who will give me a drop of water."



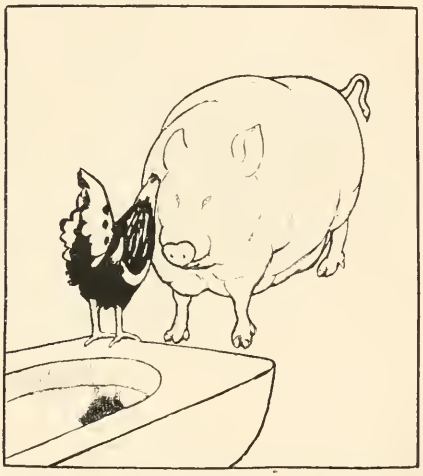
Again the woman made a demand. She said, "Unless you bring me some silk from the Queen of Saba, I will not give you the kerchief".
The little hen was pretty well tired by this time, but she did not dispair. She felt quite sure that the good Queen would help her. "Dear Queen, pray let me have a bit of silk which the peasant woman says she must have. Then I will get the kerchief from the peasant woman to give it to the linden tree, who will give me a leaf for the spring, who will give me a drop of water, so that I can save the little cock."



The Queen was no more generous than the rest. "Yes I will give you some silk, for which you must bring a pair of beautiful shoes from the shoe maker."

The shoe maker was pegging away on a pair of shoes, when all at once he saw a little hen on his knees. "My, my", he said in great surprise, "what do you want of me?"

"Please Mr. Shoemaker, I want a pair of your beautiful shoes for the Queen of Saba. If I can take them to her, she will give me a bit of silk for the peasant woman; she will let me have a kerchief for the linden tree; the linden tree will give me a leaf for the spring; the spring will give me a drop of water for the little cock."



He hesitated, but seeing such a wistful little hen, decided that he would help her. Then he said, "Yes, I will give you a beautiful pair of shoes, but you must get me a bristle from the pig".

Away she flew to the pig to ask him for a bristle. The pig was stubborn. Why should he give a bristle for nothing? "Yes, there is one condition on which I will give you a bristle, and that is, in exchange for some corn from the harvesters."

Then to the harvesters who listened to the little hen. "Yes, they will let her have some corn, but she must get them some real cream from the farmer's wife." Many people would have been discouraged after all these delays and conditions, but the little hen was unselfish and a persevering little body, so off she flew to the farmer's wife. "Dear, dear Mrs. farmer, won't you please give me some cream for the harvesters?"

"Certainly, but you must first bring me a bag full of grass from the field." This seemed almost impossible but the little hen was not then discouraged. She began to pluck the grass as fast as she could and, children, before you knew it, she had a bag full. Then she dragged it to the farmer's wife and, oh joy, the farmer's wife gave her the cream.

The little hen carried the cream to the harvesters, who gave corn for the pig. In return, the pig gave her a bristle, which she took to the shoemaker, who kept his promise and let her have a pair of his most beautiful shoes for the Queen of Saba. The Queen gave the little hen a piece of silk for the peasant woman, who let her have the kerchief she had asked for. The linden tree took the kerchief in return for a leaf, which the little hen took to the spring and got the drop of water.

When at last the drop of water was hers, she hurried to the place where she had left the little cock trying to swallow. He was at his last gasp, when she poured the little drop of water down his throat and saved him.

Children, do you think that the little cock will ever again forget to keep his word?

The Disobedient Kids.

Once upon a time, there was a mother kid with four little ones. One day it happened that she was obliged to go away alone, perhaps to the pasture, but before starting, she gathered her little family around her and said.

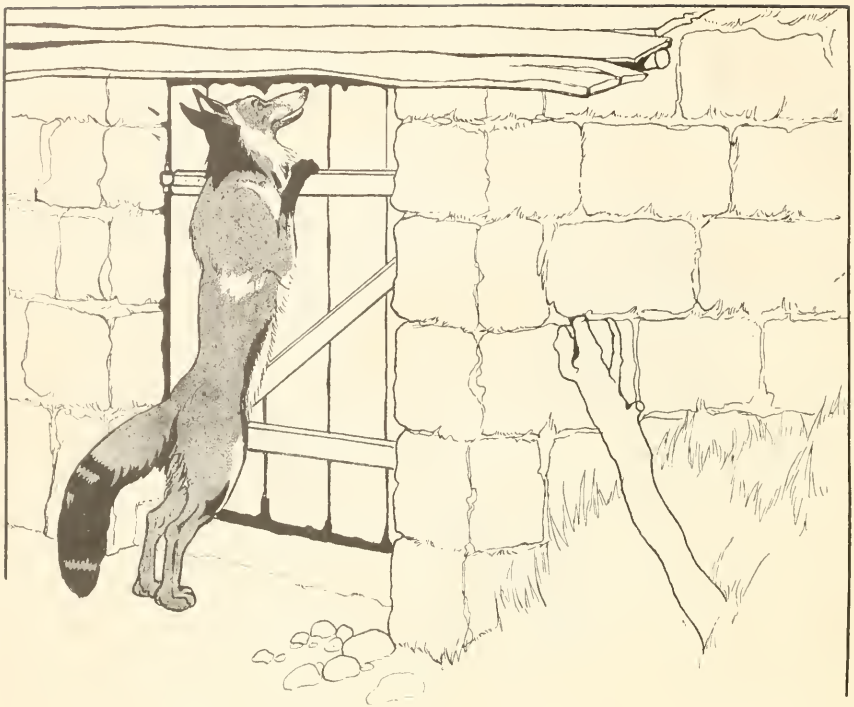
"Dear little children, I must go away and leave you alone for a while. I shall shut the door of our house, but under no conditions, no matter what happens, or who knocks, do not open till you hear my voice."

The little kids promised faithfully to do all that their mother had told them, so she closed the door tight and went away in peace.

After she had been gone awhile, a fox comes and calls to the kids, "Dear little kids, my dear children, open the door, I am bringing you some milk".

The kids listening, answered, "We shall not open the door. This is not our mother's voice. Hers is much thinner."

So the fox went away, but did not stay long. This time after she had knocked



on the door, she said in a much thinner voice than before, "Dear little ones, my own dear children, open the door. I am bringing you milk."

Again the kids listened and replied, "We shall not open. This is not our mother's voice. Hers is much thinner yet."

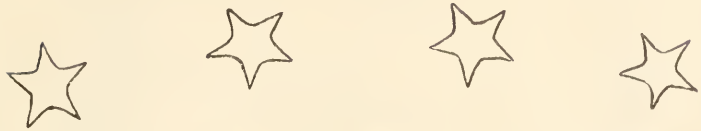
The fox went away a short distance and then called again, in the thinnest possible voice, "Dear little children, open the door. I bring you milk."

This time as the kids listened, they could not tell the difference and thought that it might be their mother's voice. One of them said, "It is our mother's voice," the other, "No it is not". Then the third said, "We shall open," the fourth, "We shall not open".

And so when they could not agree what to do, they at last began to fight with each other. They struggled so vigorously, that they pushed open the door.

Then the fox sprang in and devoured them all.

The Little Stars of Gold.



Once upon a time, there was a little girl, six years old, Bozena by name. She was an orphan. She had nothing in the world but the clothes on her back and a piece of bread which her poor godfather had given her, when he sent her off to her aunt.

Alone and forsaken, she set out for the village where her aunt lived in a little hut. It seemed a great distance to this little girl. She was timid and afraid as she trudged along and oh, so lonely. At a turn in the road, she came upon a poor beggar man, who said, "Little girl, will you give me something to eat? I am very hungry." Instantly, she gave him the whole piece of bread, without thinking of herself at all, saying, "God bless it to you."

By this time it was quite dark. Going a little further on in the wood, Bozena met another little girl, shivering with the cold. She had no shirt. She

seemed to be in great distress. This excited Bozena's pity. "I'll give her my shawl. I am sure that I can spare it," she said to herself, as she parted with it. A short ways farther on, she met another little girl, so poor that she had

no skirt. It was already towards the end of autumn and winter was coming on. Bozena took off her own skirt and gave it to the poor little girl. The cold did not trouble Bozena so very much, as she knew that she had done a good deed, and her little heart grew warm at the thought of it.

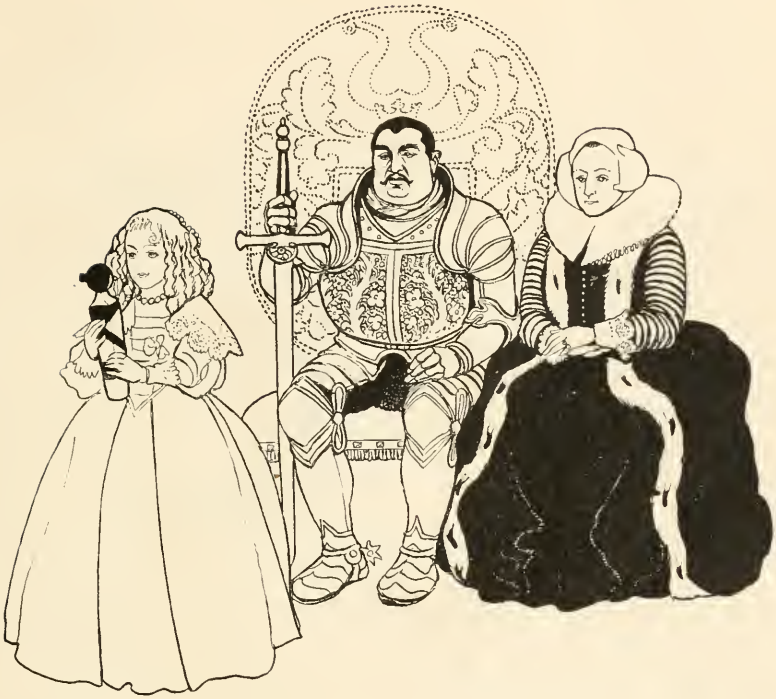
All at once, she saw little stars falling in her path way. She wanted to see what they looked like. They were yellow, bright and shining. She began to gather them up in her hands, tossing them up and down. "Oh, if I only had an apron." Why there was an apron! Then she collected the little yellow stars in her apron, and growing very tired, fell asleep.

Awaking very early in the morning, to her surprise, there was one of the little stars making itself into a pan cake for her breakfast! She ate all she could and still had some left.

After wandering a great distance, she reached her aunt's hut in the evening. After kissing her aunt, she said, "Oh, auntie, see what I have in my apron". Instead of the little stars which she expected to see, a stream of gold pieces poured out of her apron and rolled all over the room.

Imagine the surprise and joy of the poor old woman. Now she could not only support Bozena, but could do much good for others all the rest of her life.

Castle Bousin.



Once upon a time, a Knight, Turynsky by name, was the owner of many castles, but he could live in only one at a time. His castle was called Bousin. There he lived with his wife and only daughter, a beautiful girl, who alas was deaf and dumb. This was the one great sorrow of her father and mother.

One day the little girl decided she would go down to the farm to see what the little lambs were doing, and how much they had grown since she had last seen them. Now the farm was a long distance from the castle and every time before, her father had gone with her, because he knew the way. But the foolish little girl had decided that this time, she would go alone. She had a fine time, running here and there, wherever her fancy led her. But the farm was nowhere in sight and she began to be uneasy.

Then she became more and more afraid. She was now in the thick woods, where there was but little light, so that she could not see whether or not there were any foot prints that she could follow.

She was lost indeed. You would not be so poorly off as she, for you could shout and cry, but she, poor thing, was deaf and dumb, so all she could do, was to run about, more and more confused. Her feet were tired, oh so

tired, and there was no kind nurse to care for her. There was the fear of wild beasts and the darkness of evening. Then too she began to think that her mother would be alarmed at her absence, and perhaps angry.

All at once she found herself at the well. Tremblingly she knelt down for a long drink of its cool water. On getting up, she noticed two well beaten paths, but she did not know which one to choose. This made her think that not every path leads home. At the same time she remembered, that whenever her mother was in trouble or perplexity, she would go to her room and pray. So the little girl knelt down. "Oh, dear God, be good to me and show me the way out of the awful wood, so that I can get home safe."

At the same time, a humming noise sounded in her ears, clearer and clearer. She was more frightened than ever, and began to cry at what she thought was a new terror. But just as she was about to run, wonderful to relate, she saw a white sheep coming towards her from the forest.

Behind the first sheep, trotted a second, a third, a fourth, until the whole flock stood around her at the spring. Each sheep had a tiny bell around its neck and as the sheep came there, the bells gave a gentle tinkle. But wonder of wonders, the little girl could hear them. She could now really hear. They were her father's sheep. There was the faithful, old white dog, trotting along and wagging his tail, as he looked up in the eyes of Barta, the shepherd, as much as to say, "What's all this about?"

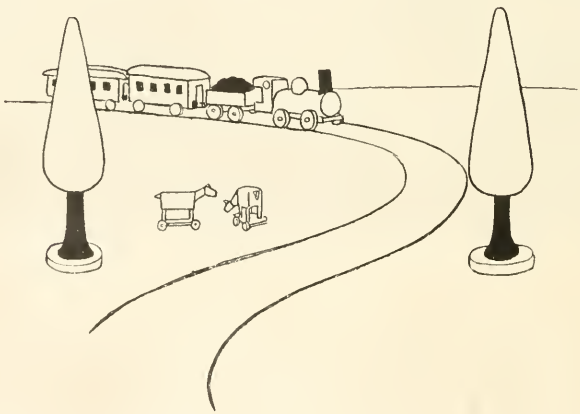
"Oh, Barta," she shouted, as she ran up to him, "I am so glad to see you. I was so afraid." Another wonder. She could also speak.

Barta gathered her into his arms and calmed her fears. The castle was not so very far off after all, but the little one did not know that. Her parents had been terribly alarmed at her absence, as she had never been away alone before. The servants had been sent in all directions, the father was waiting at the castle, and the mother had gone to the farm.

You can well imagine how glad the father and mother were to know that their little daughter was safe and sound at home once more, and then too, that she could speak and hear. "Oh, mother, I was so glad to see those sheep and Barta too. I was so frightened and afraid that I should never see you again."

The father and mother were so delighted at having their daughter free from all harm and miraculously cured of her deafness and dumbness, that they decided that they would build a little church at the well, as a thanksgiving to the good God, who had led their dear one safely home.

The little girl is dead now, for all this happened many, many years ago. The good Knight Turynsky, his wife, Barta and his dog are also dead. The old sheep died and after them came the little lambs. And so it goes in this world, dear children, the old die, and the young come after them.



Smolineck.

Once upon a time, there was a little boy, Smolineck by name, who spent many happy hours with a stag which had great, big golden antlers, in fact some people called the stag, Golden Antlers, as if that was his real name. He and Smolineck lived together in a dear, little house. Every morning before going to feed on the rich and juicy grass in the meadows, he cautioned the boy;

"Now, Smolineck, be sure to lock the door the minute I am gone and no matter who knocks or how loudly, never, never, open the door."

For a long time no one came to the door and the boy was beginning to forget that there might be danger, but one day he thought he heard some one at the door. He called out in a deep voice,

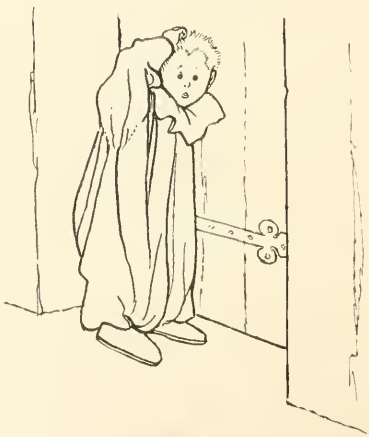
"Who's there?"

The answer came in tones so sweet and soft, "Oh, Smolineck, dear little Smolineck, open the door for us, just a tiny little bit. We will only put in our two little fingers and, as soon as we have warmed ourselves, we will at once go away".

The boy remembered what Golden Antlers had said and did not open the door. The sweet voices begged so hard, but it was no use. The door remained fast shut. It is true that Smolineck would like to have opened it, but he was afraid of what the stag would say.

That night when Golden Antlers came home, Smolineck told him that sweet and gentle voices had begged so hard, oh so hard for him to let them in, but he would not.

"You did just right in obeying me and in not opening the door", said the stag. "They were bad, wicked fairies and no friends of yours. If you had opened to them, they would have entered and carried you off with them."



The next morning the stag, as usual, went to his pasture and Smolineck locked the door tight. After awhile, he heard the same voices outside, sweeter than before, singing the same song, in which they only wanted to put in two of their little fingers and warm themselves, when they would go away.

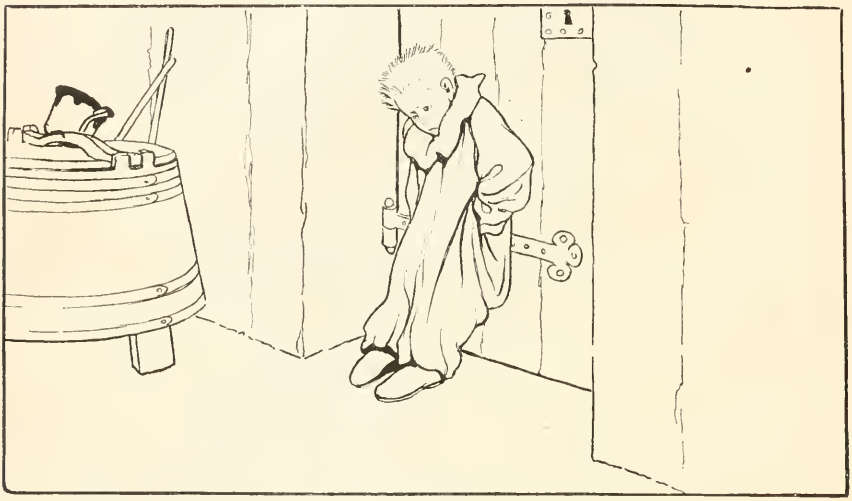
"No", replied the boy, I can't open the door. You must go away". But none the less, he did wish that he could open the door just a crack, so that he could have a look at the fairies. Then they began to shiver with the cold

and begged so piteously, that Smolineck felt sorry for them and opened the door, just wide enough for them to put in their two little fingers, as they had promised.

The fairies thanked him very prettily and put in their two little fingers, then their hands, and before he knew it, their arms and legs, in fact the whole of their bodies were inside the room. In the twinkling of an eye they had seized the little chap and carried him off with them to their cave. Then he began to cry, but it was too late. He was in their power.

"Oh, my dear stag, over the mountains, in the valleys, where you are feeding, help! The bad, wicked fairies are carrying away Smolineck, your little boy."

Fortunately the stag was not so far away this time, but that he could hear the cry of the little boy. So away he bounded with the speed of the wind, to the rescue of the little captive. He found the prisoner in the cave where



the bad fairies lived. In he dashed, caught up the boy and away he rushed. No bad fairies could catch him! Oh, how proudly he dashed along, his golden antlers high in the air. To teach the boy that he must remember to be obedient when instructions were given him, he received a whipping by the stag when they reached home. That children, was to be a reminder that he should never forget again. Smolineck then determined, that he would never be caught again.

Unfortunately we so soon forget our good intentions, and when after a long silence, the bad, wicked fairies came again, begging more sweetly than ever before, "Dear, dear Smolineck, do, do let us in, please do. All we want is to put our two little fingers in and then we will go away."

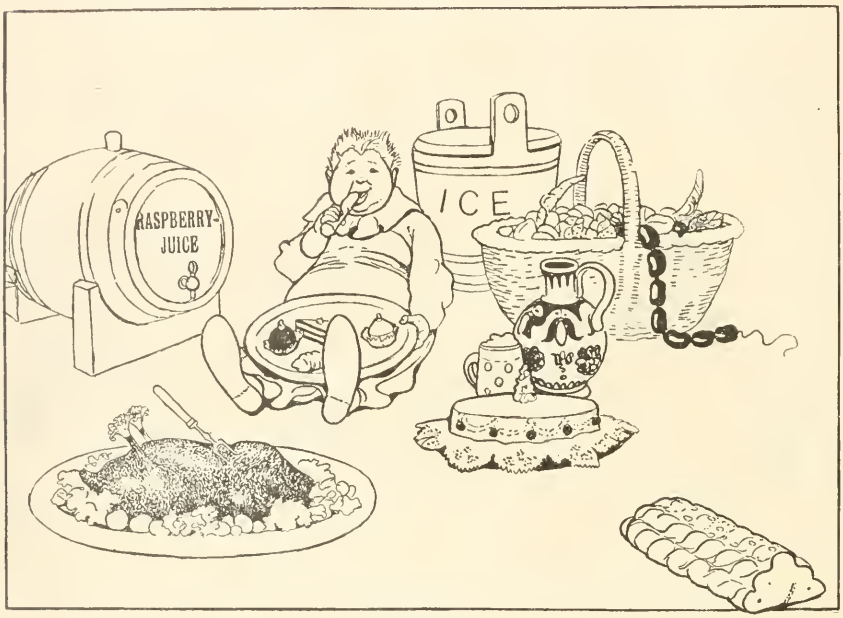
"No", he replied, "I will not. I know what you want. You want to carry me off again."

"Oh, no", they said, "but even if we did, you need not be afraid with us, for you will be much better off than you are now. You will have plenty of good things to eat and we will play with you all the time."

So the foolish little boy, persuaded himself that the bad fairies meant what they said and opened the door such a tiny bit, when in they rushed. This time as they seized him, they threatened to kill him, while they were hurrying off with him. But the boy did cry out to old faithful, "Oh, my Gold Antlers, far behind the mountains and in the deep valleys where you are feeding, the bad fairies are carrying off your little boy."

But this time his cry brought no response, for the stag was a long ways off, so that he could not hear him. Little Smolineck was very well off in the cave, as far as good things to eat were concerned, for he had all the sweets and dainties that he could possibly desire. But he did not know that he was being stuffed, so that he might be fat enough for the bad fairies to make a meal of, just as the old farmer fattens his turkeys for Thanksgiving.

The fairies shut him up in a room all by himself and no one ever came to play with him. After he had been there many days, they looked at his little finger to see if he was fat enough for their dinner. Poor little chap, he



had no idea of what they were going to do with him now, as they undressed him and put him in a trough. But when a big fire was lighted, then he knew that he was going to be cooked for the bad fairies dinner!

He begged for mercy, but it was no use. Then he did cry out, loud to Golden Antlers way off in the deep valleys and over the lofty mountains, that they were carrying Smolineck off on a journey from which there would be no return for him.

All at once he heard the joyful, hurrying feet, as old Antlers dashed into the room, gathered the boy up on his broad horns and flew like the wind to the home far away in the woods, over the rivers and streams till their rapid flight was ended.

Once more they were at home safe. I think that Smolineck deserved the good spanking he got. He promised that he would never again open to fairies or any one else, however pitifully or sweetly they sang. From that time on, little Smolineck was the most obedient of all little boys.

The House of Candy.

Once upon a time there was a poor father, who had two children, John and Mary. His daily work was to cut wood in the forest. He was very, very poor. He had no one to take care of the children. They were all alone. As he was away all day, he felt that he should marry again, so that the children should have a mother's care.

But the stepmother proved to be a very cruel, neglectful woman, who did not want to work. Not only did she not love the children, but she wanted to get rid of them, so she gave her husband no peace. She made up all kinds of lies about the wickedness of the children and said that he must get rid of them. She commanded him to take them to the woods and leave them there.

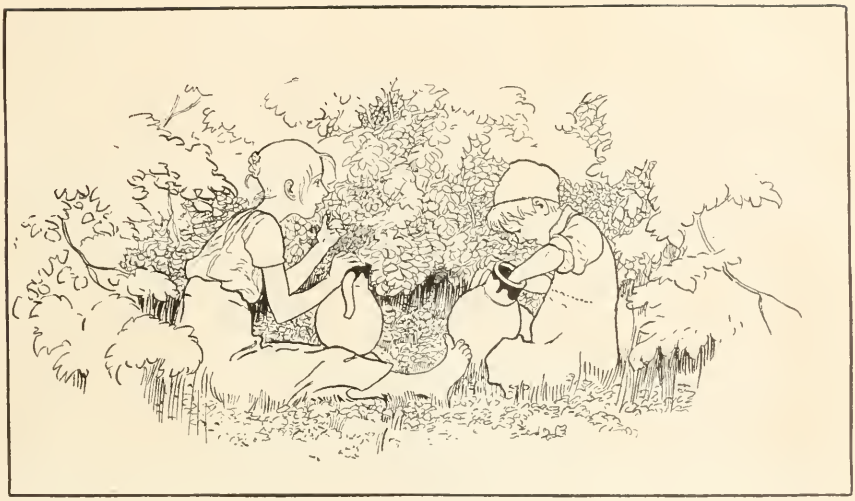
He was afraid of her and at last consented. Therefore one day, he said to the children with a sad heart, "Take your little baskets and come with me to the woods to pick strawberries". They jumped with joy and at once taking their little baskets, they went most happily with their father to the woods.

When they were deep in the forest, the father led them to an open place where there were many berries, in fact the place was red with the luscious fruit.

"Now, dear ones," he said, "Pick all the berries you please, while I am away. As long as you hear me cutting wood, you will know that I am near by."

The children began eagerly to pick berries, and the father went a little ways on, where he bound his mallet on a tree. It swung back and forth in the wind, hitting the tree and making a noise like the cutting of wood. When this had been done, the father returned home, leaving the children in the woods.

When John and Mary had their baskets full of berries, and had eaten their fill, they began to think of looking for their father. They went to the place where they heard the sound of the swinging mallet, but they saw nothing of their father, only the mallet hitting against the trees. This mallet was a big hammer which he used for driving in the wedges to split the logs.



"Where is father," asked John? "Perhaps he has gone home and forgotten us".

Now Mary had perfect trust in her father. She could not think that he would wilfully desert them. She said to John, "Why do you think that? Surely he is somewhere near and will come for us, no doubt". So they waited for quite a while. They ate from their little baskets, till the berries were all gone. Then they filled them again. And so the time was flying.

Before it grew quite dark, the sound of the mallet ceased and the children began to be frightened. They took their baskets and once more looked for father. The sun had set and evening had come. They called, "Father, where are you"? but no sound came to answer them. Mary who was older and wiser than John, but just as much afraid, would not let him see that tears were so near her eyes. Then she tried to comfort him, by saying, "Wait a minute, I will climb up in a tree from which I can perhaps see a light. Then we will go towards it". Up the tree she scrambled. It was so high that she could see from its top in all directions.

After awhile she saw a light gleaming in the distance. "Oh, John! I see a light! Let's go towards it."

Down she came and they started.

Following the light, they came to a tiny little house. It was such a funny little house; they felt of it with their hands and then they saw that it was made of candy.

John was delighted. Now he felt that he could have all the candy he wanted. At once he scrambled up on the roof to break some off to throw down to Mary, who was still afraid that some harm might come to them. But John was already on the roof and had peeled off some candy, which he had thrown down to her.

They went to its little window and peeked in. There they saw an old man and woman sitting by the fire. At first they thought they would knock and ask for something to eat, but Mary was afraid.

The moment the candy was broken off, the old woman said, "What is that? I hear a noise. Surely some one is breaking into our house. See who's there."

The old man went out and saw a little girl under their window. "What are you doing here? Are you trying to break into our house?", he asked her.

"Oh, no, Grandfather. It is the wind", said Mary, her childish voice trembling with fear. With this the old man was satisfied, as he went back into the house.

The children had eaten enough, and they nestled to sleep in each others arms, under the window of the house of candy. In the morning, John climbed up on the roof to get another piece of candy. Again the old woman sent the man out to see what was going on.

Mary thought to get rid of the old man once more, but this time, he saw two children. Then he went back to tell the old woman.

"Quick, quick, dear John", called Mary, "we must run away at once, or something terrible will happen to us," for she had heard the old woman command the man to catch the children, so that she could roast them for her dinner. John leaped down from the roof, Mary snatched his hand and they ran away as fast as they could.

Suddenly John and Mary came upon a woman in a field of flax. Panting and out of breath, "Tell us please, mother, where we can hide. A bad old man from the house of candy is trying to catch us. He wants to take us home, so that they can roast us for their dinner, because we have taken a piece of candy from their roof."

The woman in the field was a good fairy and loved all little children. She determined to help John and Mary, so she said, "Go this way a little distance into the woods. I will see what I can do with the old man." Then she showed the children the path, along which they ran as fast as their little legs could take them.

After a little while, the old man came along, panting and blowing. Seeing the woman in the field, he called out, "Woman, have you seen two children go by and which way did they go?"

The woman pretended that she was deaf, she answered, "I am in the flax field pulling up the weeds."

"Woman, I ask you, if you have seen two children pass this way."

But she continued, "I shall weed the flax, until it is ripe."

Raising his voice, "Listen to me", woman, have you seen two children go by here?"

"When we shall have gathered the crop, we shall clean the seeds, and then moisten the flax", said the woman.

This time the man fairly shouted, "Stupid, don't you understand me? Have you seen two children pass this way?"

"When we have moistened the flax, we shall spread it out in the sun to dry", she kept on.

"Woman, are you deaf? Have you seen two children pass this way?"

"After the flax is dried, we shall comb and then hackle it."

"Don't you hear? Have you seen two children?"

"Then when the flax is hackled, we shall bind it on the distaff ready for spinning."

"I don't care anything about that. Have you seen two children pass by here"? and with each question, he grew more and more angry.

„And after we have spun some fine garters, we will wind the rest of the thread on spools."

"Tell me, woman, have you seen two children pass this way?"

"When we have wound the thread on spools, we shall then weave some beautiful fine linen."

"I don't care any thing about the linen. I ask you again, have you seen two children go by here?"

"When we have woven the linen, we shall bleach it. Then we shall cut it out for little shirts, swaddling clothes, skirts and aprons."

"Are you deaf", he yelled, "Have you seen two children go by?"

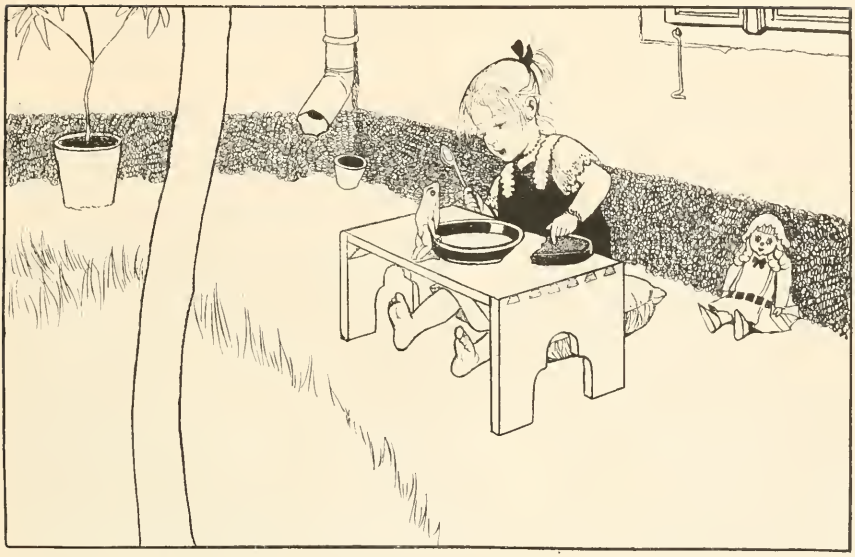
"Oh yes, oh yes, what are we going to do with it? Finally we shall make tinder from it. Then the flint, when it strikes will make a tiny spark. The fire of God will not consume it. The fire will become smoke, the smoke wind. That is the end of my story."

"I did not ask you any thing about that", thundered the old man. What I want to know, did you see two children pass this way?"

"Children, children? You should have told me that in the first place. Of course I saw them. They went that way, by the path through the fields, down to the brook where the willows are, but you will never catch them, for they flew like hawks."

At this the woman showed the man the opposite side to which she had directed the children. Then the old man recognized that he had been outwitted. He frothed with rage and turned back home. When he had gone, the woman disappeared from the field and the children reached home in safety. The father was very glad to get them back.

The Frog and Belinka.

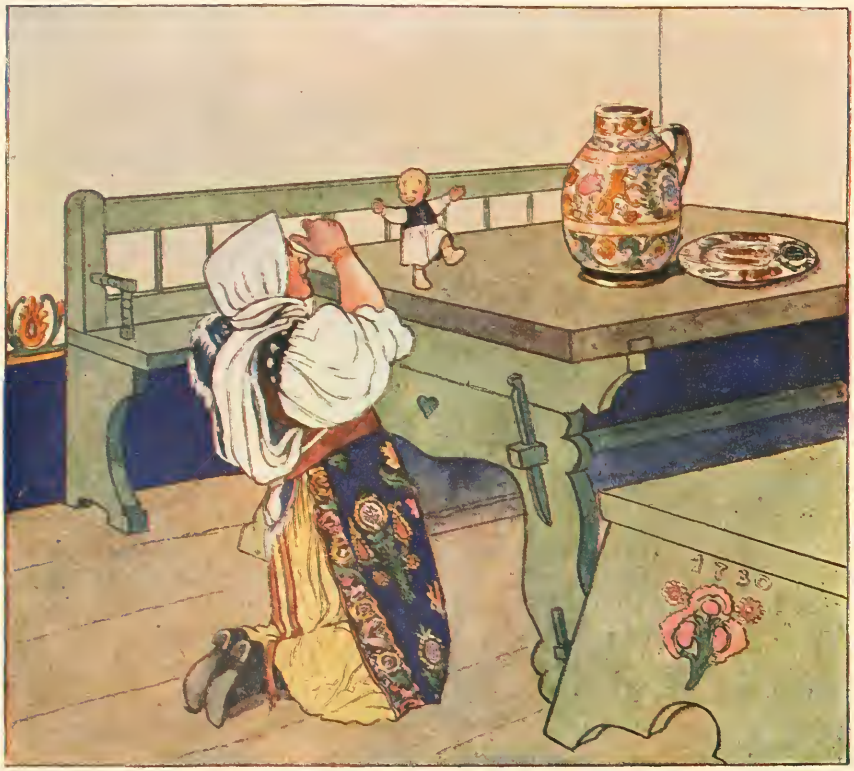


Once upon a time, there was a little girl, whose name was Belinka. She used to sit under the window in the garden, eating bread and milk from her bowl. One day a little frog came hopping along towards her and stared at her while she enjoyed her sweet milk. He wished that he might have some too. So he hopped up on the table, and placed his two little feet on the bowl, all the time watching Belinka. Then all at once, he darted out his tongue and took a little sip. It tasted so good, that he wanted more. The little girl smiled and thought that it was very cute to see that little tongue darting in and out. It was so very amusing, that she decided to share her meal with the frog. From that time, whenever the little girl had her bread and milk in the garden, the frog was sure to come for his share. Belinka was not so much troubled at first, but one day she noticed that her little friend was eating the milk only. "See here", she said, gently tapping him on the head, "Must you eat the milk only? You must eat the bread too".

The mother hearing Belinka talking to some one, ran out of the house and seeing a frog eating with her child, killed him.

From that time, Belinka ate her bread and milk alone, but she pined for that little frog, who had become such a good playmate. Now she had no one. Her little cheeks began to pale and before another year had rolled round, she had died.

A Story about Palecek, "Little Thumb".



Once upon a time, there was a man and his wife, who had no children. They were very lonely and unhappy. Then they determined to pray to God for a little son. Perhaps He would hear them, if they prayed with all their hearts. "Dear God", they prayed, "You know how much we long for a little boy to be the joy and comfort of our old age. We pray you to have pity on us and send us a son."

The man felt sure that God would listen and went to his work in a contented frame of mind. One day the man went off to the fields to plow. While he was away, a little son was born, no larger than a thumb. His mother called him, "little thumb". Hardly had he been born, before he was all over the house, hopping, skipping and running. He was full of joy and singing all the time.

What was the mother's surprise when the little fellow said that noon, "Mother, give me father's dinner, so that I can take it to him in the field".

The mother made the sign of the cross. She was superstitious and did not know what to make of the boy. She had never in all her life ever heard of a boy like him. Really she was afraid to give him the basket, heavy with the father's dinner, for he was such a tiny mite. He insisted and insisted. Amused at his funny antics, as he gave her no peace, she packed the dinner in the basket and gave it to the boy.

Wonder of wonders! he took the basket on his head and ran with it to the fields. He could not be seen for the basket which covered him completely. It was such a funny sight to see this basket go along all by itself, as it were. The dust in the road was as high as his waist and almost smothered the little man, but do you think that he would give up? No sir! he trudged along, sneezing and puffing like a little engine.

After a while he came to the brook over which there was no bridge. Now what was he going to do? He was a wise, clever little chap and remembered that there was a big wooden spoon in the basket, so he reached for it and placing it on the water, it bacame a little boat on which he gaily crossed over, towing the basket after him.

When he came to the field where his father was plowing, he bagan to call from far off,

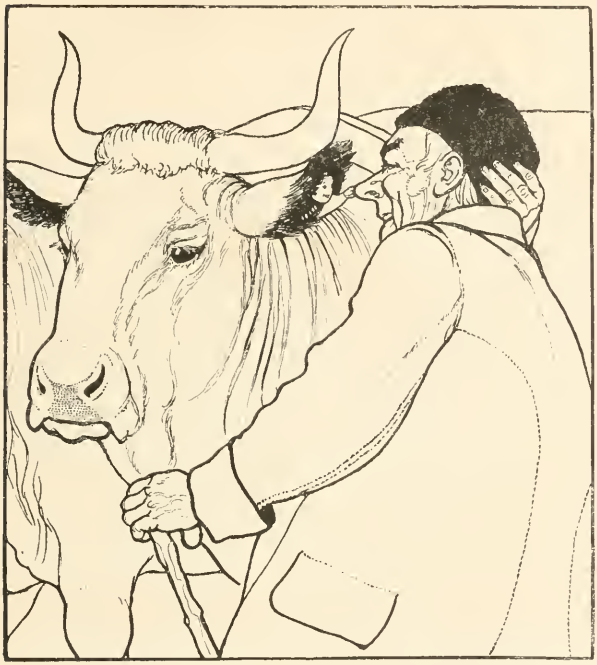
"Father, father, here I am with your dinner".

But the father did not hear the thin little voice. Besides he did not even know that a son had been born to him that morning, and then he would not have believed that a newly born son could take his father's dinner to him that same day.

Palecek kept on calling. When he stood at his father's feet, the father turned to see where that buzzing sound came from. Then he saw the basket behind him, but did not see Palecek. The father stared at the wonderful basket that had come to the field all alone, as he thought. Then for the first time, he saw a little boy no bigger than a thumb. Imagine his surprise to see such a little boy. Had anybody ever seen one like him before? And then to hear him talk. It was such a cunning sound. He could not believe his ears when Palecek said, "I am your son!"

"Born this morning and bringing my dinner! You are a wonder, a very miracle of a son", laughed the father, as sitting down he began to eat his dinner.

While his father was eating, Palecek said that he would like to plow a bit for him. He also asked for the whip to drive the oxen.



"How can you drive the oxen, my little son, when you can't even carry the whip", laughed the father?

"I will make them go without a whip", answered the boy, as with one bound, he jumped on the nearest ox and crept into his ear. As he did so, he cried as loud as he could, "Hoi! Heiso! Hwi!"

The boy's voice sounded like thunder in the ear of that ox, as he started off in a mad race, dragging his mate with him. The oxen ran up and down, over that field so fast, that Palecek plowed more that noon than the father had the whole morning.

Around the field where Palecek was plowing, wound the main road. About that time a rich merchant, who had been to market, was on his way home. When he saw the oxen plowing alone, he was greatly astonished. He could hardly believe his eyes and went up closer to see what it all meant. Then for the first time, he heard the voice of Little Thumb urging them on. With amazement he listened to see where the voice came from. Then he heard it say, "Here I am in the ear of the ox".

Looking in the ear of the ox, there he spied Palecek. He was delighted with the little chap and wished that he might have him for his own. "Ha, ha", he said, "that's the lad for me. He's so small, that he won't eat very much." That suited him, for he was a very stingy man.

"Will you enter my service", he asked Little Thumb?

"Why not, if my father is willing", he replied. Then he sprang like a shot from the ear of the ox, and running to his father, whispered, "Father, the merchant wants to hire me, but don't let him have me too cheap. Have no fear for me. I shall return to you very soon, but you must be sure to follow us as soon as he takes me."

When the merchant came to the father to ask if he could hire the clever little chap, the father asked,

"How much will you pay?"

"How much do you want?"

"Twenty-one ducats is the wages", said the father.

The merchant at once consented and paid the price. Then he caught up Palecek carefully and put him in his pocket and off they went.

The father followed them afar off, as Palecek had urged. He soon learned why, for all along the road he found one piece of money after another that had fallen from the merchant's pockets.

Little Thumb, as soon as the merchant had put him so carefully in his pocket, had bitten a hole in it, so that all the money ran out. Then he slipped through the hole himself and hurrying on to meet his father, they went home rejoicing.

The merchant arriving home, called out to his wife before he had reached the gate, "Come and see the marvel I have brought you!"

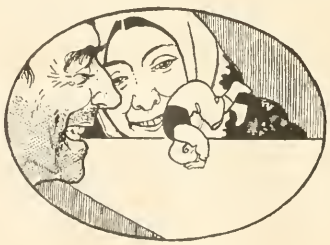
"What is it", she said, as she ran out to meet him?"

"A wonderful little man, who can do magic work for us. He is worth much gold."

The wife looked around, wondering where he could be. Not seeing any one, "where is he", she asked?

Then the merchant thrusting his hand in his pocket to pull out Palecek, found alas, no Little Thumb, nothing but a great big hole! Not only was Palecek gone, but all his money too.

Then the merchant knew that Palecek had outwitted him.



The Magician, the Cat and the Stove.

Once upon a time there was a famous magician. This wonderful man was very fond of children.

"Now think, children," he said one day when they crowded around him,

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"I have seventy-seven pockets and in each one a story. Which pocket do you choose?"

"Let be from the tenth," exclaimed a little girl.

"Very well," said the magician, "let it be from the tenth" and so he began, as all fairy stories everywhere begin.

"Once upon a time, there was a king. He had a big dough board and a big oven. On top of the oven was the favorite place for his cat, which would sit there and talk to the king. Now listen, children. This tale is too long to tell you now."

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